1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

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Fig. 1. Coast Veddas.

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Fig. 2. Coast Veddas of Vakarai

[facing p. 332 aw]

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

101 We found that the Coast Veddas spoke of themselves as
173 Verdas and said that long ago their fathers came from inland.
191 They all speak Tamil, but some assert that they still know, and at times use among themselves, their old Vedda language, but when we asked the men who made this statement to speak in their ancestral dialect they spoke Sinhalese[1]. Besides this a few of the older men know the names of some of the Vedda *waruge*, while others are able to trace their descent to them.

142 The Coast Vedda is darker, taller and more stoutly built than the true Veddas. In fact they generally resemble low caste Tamils, yet in almost every settlement there are one or two men shorter than their comrades and presenting an almost typical Vedda caste of countenance. The women are all much [291] bigger than true Vedda women and would pass for Tamils, after whose fashion they dress.

Plate LXVIII, figs. 1 and 2, represent Verdas from settlements to the north of Kalkudah.

241 The Verdas build comfortable huts in small clearings, usually
342 within a mile of the sea; they cultivate maize and pumpkins and other easily grown crops round their houses and in patches of clearing in the surrounding jungle.

415 They have plenty of pots and baskets and also possess drums
534 and fishing gear, so that their mode of life differs but little from
621 that of the poor and low caste Tamils who are their neighbours. One, two, or more rarely, three houses stand in each clearing, and it seems that the people living in each clearing are closely related by blood or connected by marriage.

361 The chief Verda settlements north of Batticaloa are Pellan-
505 chenai near Kalkudah 20 miles from Batticaloa and at Varkanari some 10 miles north of Kalkudah on the far side of the river which is crossed by a ferry at Valarchchenai. At Panichchenkeni some 14 miles further north is another ferry, where the local Verdas act as ferrymen, while there are two other Verda settlements some three miles beyond the ferry at sites called Vellaiade and Kandaladi respectively.

[1] Nevill (loc. cit.) noticed the same state of affairs, he said "Only the old men speak what they call Vaedda, which is pure but quaint Sinhalese with a Vaedda accent, as a rule, though mixed with some words characteristic of true Vaedda."

3:Naish G-5 (1925) 1930 AX5 Vedda AX5

123 (Great Goddess).[8] It was in vain that I pointed out the urgency
[796 of the work and protested against any delay, even going the
776] length of suggesting that the ceremony should be postponed. After a good deal of futile argument I was obliged to resign myself to the inevitable.

My chagrin was to some extent lessened when the Chief Headman approached me with an invitation from the people to be present at the ceremony. The invitation was welcome, for it offered an alternative to an evening spent in the company only of a book and of my own thoughts in the solitude of the one-roomed " rest house " where I had my temporary quarters. It was accordingly arranged that the Chief Headman should come to fetch me after my dinner.

The moon,—full two days before,—had already risen when the Chief Headman and his following of village notables emerged from the shadows of the jungle bordering the high road. I got up from the long chair in which I had been sitting on the verandah and joined them, and we set off northwards along the road. After walking along it for about half a mile we turned off to the right through alternate thick jungle and open spaces overgrown with *illuk*-grass, and with here and there a solitary tree casting a deep black shadow under the white light of the moon, in the direction of the mouth of the river which crossed the high road about three and a half miles to the north of our camp. We had
● [534] gone in this way perhaps a mile in all when I began to be aware of the rhythmical throbbing of a tom-tom, at first only faint in the distance, somewhere ahead in the jungle. I recollect well the feeling of growing excitement as the sound grew gradually louder and more insistent with our advance. Another mile, and the path which our party was following, at that point through thick
123 jungle, took a sharp turn to the right, and we suddenly found
796 ourselves in a large circular clearing, surrounded by high timber. To our right as we entered were the spectators, squatted upon the ground in rows and facing towards that part of the enclosure which lay to our left. Even the fringes of the jungle seemed to be

[8] This goddess is presumably the goddess Ammal, " who sends small-pox and skin disease ": see *The Veddas*, p. 336.

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

361 [103] to a cleft fragment of stone resembling a giant lizard crawling up the sheer face of the rock.

[241] We found Bowala deserted. The young coconut and areca palms, plantains, sugar-canes and pine-apples there were choked with grass and lantana. The huts were falling to pieces and leaked like sieves as we found to our cost when a shower overtook us; the grass thatch, ruined [136] by white ants, was the home of innumerable rats, brahmin-lizards and poisonous *karawalas** that hung head-down from the rafters ready to strike.

221 The desolate state of the hamlet is explainable by the *chena* life of the people. In December, as the crops ripen, they forsake their homes for the shacks of the *chena*, leaving perhaps an aged couple behind. In April, when the crops of *kurrukkan* and maize have been taken, they return to the village to repair their huts and wean back to life such plants as have survived the inroads of wild animals and weeds. In July, *chena* land is leased again; and so the wasteful routine is repeated. 631 A hamlet occupied for six months and abandoned for six has not much chance of headway. If the population of a village is at all numerous, there are sufficient people to occupy both *chena* and village, without detriment to either; if the community is very small they remain *chena* dwellers with no permanent homes; if intermediate, we find the state of things at Bowala. In favoured places a mere nucleus of human beings swells in time to a thriving and populous village. But in the insalubrious *Vanni* privation and ignorance keep the numbers low. Two dwindling villages may combine to save one from extinction. Often a place populous to-day is a wilderness to-morrow and *vice versa*. This is typical of the kaleidoscopic way the forest hamlets change. Names so fine on maps—Illukpitiya, Mahaella, Embillene—are found when reached to be derelict; a crumbling hut perhaps hidden in jungle, or a hardy tamarind or palmyrah the sole witness of vanished homes.

101 Bowala folk are better jungle men than many farther inland. Though [262] far from fastidious in their choice of meats, for they eat the mongoose and rat, they abhor the porcupine, sure mark of Vedda ancestry. They [287] fashion bags of beaten *riti* bark and carry pouches of monkey skin that [281] ladies might envy. Their bed-frames are spanned with sambur-hide, 415 their powder flasks are the dried scrota of sambur. A monkey skin, stretched over a coconut shell fitted with handle, screw and string, and [534] manipulated with a small bow, serves them as a violin out of which they scrape mournful disharmonies. They snare the smaller animals, such as 224 the hare, pangolin and chevrotan, with *habbakas* or weighted frames poised over passages used by these animals; we saw one of these set for 222 chevrotan with a bundle of urine-drenched leaves for bait. Some among 481 them could brave the formidable heights of Westminster Abbey in quest of the combs of the rock bee—the most hazardous of jungle pursuits.

000 We spent the night in a large cave at the base of Westminster Abbey and made the ascent next morning, replenishing our water bottles at a small basin formed by the buttressing roots of a rock-tamarind and rejoicing in the grandiloquent name, for so trivial a thing, of *Kothuru-pathaha* (gnat-water-hole).

It had rained all night and there was still a drizzle. Squeezing through crevices, crouching through low caves, climbing trees, clinging to rough

*Small venomous snakes.

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The dancers of Bowalo. (Page 49)

Hathaha, a weighted frame-work for trapping animals. (Page 48)

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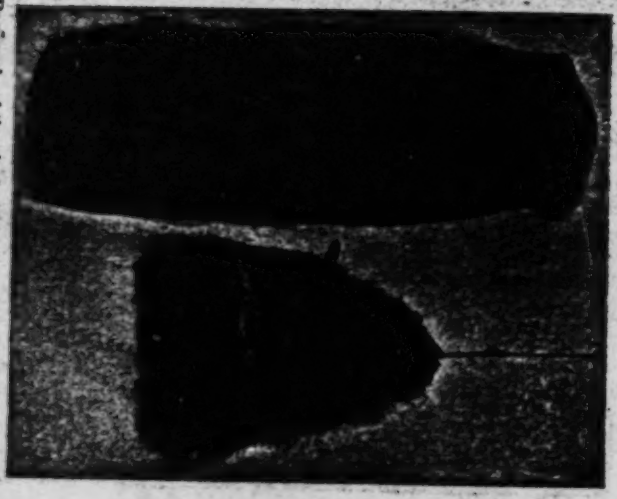

Bag made of threaded *rit* bark and monkey skin pouch. (Page 48)

[Facing p. 49]

5: Spittel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

ladders prepared for us beforehand, we made the laborious ascent; finally shinning up the interlacing roots of an obliging banyan tree that gripped a great hump of rock, we attained the summit of the northern bastion. Here we found the usual signs of old-world occupation: cisterns and seats cut out of the living rock, fragments of brick and pottery, and strong stone walls overrun with scrub and pine-apple.

The height was desolate but for wild cats, and songless but for the boom of wanderoo far below. A ceaseless drizzle blanketed in mist the superb view of forest and hill we commanded; but every now and then the mist lifted and showed the graceful contours of the ranges. There, crouching like a headless beast, its neck indrawn, was magnificent Wadinagala; to the south was the long straight ridge of Moneragala; and close at hand were the twin domes named by the Veddas *Thanagoda* (breast mounds) and behind them *Thanakirigoda* (breast milk mound) with wracks of milky mist caressing their summits.

On our descent we were better able to discern certain features of the rock the rain had so far hidden from us. Out of long horizontal fissures high on the perpendicular face of the hill, projected numerous sticks driven in for foot-hold by honey-gatherers; and dangling from the summit was a long cane that had once borne a daring fellow within reach of seemingly unassailable hives. Here we heard a marvellous tale: A Vedda of Bowala once saw a heap of wax that had accumulated on a ledge which an overhanging brow of rock made inaccessible. Nothing daunted, he armed himself with a torch and sambur-horn, descended by just such a cane as we now saw, and swung himself to and fro within reach of the wax, heating it with the torch each time he approached it. When he thought the mass sufficiently molten he stuck the horn deep into it and waited till it set. Then swinging himself once more towards it and seizing hold of the embedded horn, he leaped on to the ledge collected the wax, and swung off again. He did this year by year. On the last occasion, the horn not being sufficiently secure, the poor fellow was dashed to death among the trees and stones below. His wife who had witnessed the tragedy carried back word, "*Meena kalangkal-angme popehorai*," which being onomatopoeic hardly requires rendering.

Our departure from Bowala was ceremonial. On the path stood a drummer, with two boyish figures disguised from head to foot in dry plantain leaves, that were plaited into tails behind. Their faces were hidden by speckled masks made from fragments of gourd-rind, with slits for eyes and mouth, and a blob of resin with fibres attached for nose and beard. Their bare feet and hands were the only indications that these scare-crows were in reality human beings.

The drummer struck; the dance began. The time twelve noon. The floor a root-ridden path bestrewn with elephant droppings and intercepted by beflowered streams. The walls, bordering forest trees festooned with great lianas on which parrots chattered. The dazzling sky above. For orchestra, the staccato rhythm of the drum, the jangling bells that studded the deerskin greaves of the dancers, the sound of a falling branch perhaps, or the short, sharp clamorous outburst of chirping cicalas. For a mile or more the performers led the way with a swaying two-step dance, hopping circularly on one leg to let us catch up did they out-distance us. At the next village the drummer wore the greaves, and

λ [the hill called Westminster Abbey. – Analyst]

3. A VEDDA OF DIVULANA

DIVULANA was recompense for our toil. The irrigation bungalow, placed high above the bund, over-looked the beautiful hill-encircled tank, whose glassy surface was broken by stones and snags on which cormorants and darters sunned.

Two miles within the forest lived Naga-Kauwa, a witless dwarf of fifty, the sole Vedda of Divulana. Born in Kovil Vannami, he came as a child to the Rasagala caves, of which in their best day his people occupied four or five. Now he and his family alone survived. Three years ago he had abandoned cave life for that of the *chena* ; and there we found him amidst his cassava and the tender teak he nursed for a consideration from Government.

His stalwart sons—quite unlike the father—brought us some yams, a mouse deer and a primitive drum—the broken-off rim of an earthen pot covered with wanderoo skin and fitted with a taut fibre.

Kauwa's hut was a thing to behold. The Tamils had said, "See Kauwa, this is the way to build a house" ; and Kauwa had built this crazy thing a child of twelve might have bettered. The thatch was a medley of dry grass and bark ; the walls were of wattle, which stuck out untrimmed through the roof, and bark slats so poorly fitted together that there was more aperture than cover. The structure was no more than four-foot square and two-storied at that ; merely a covered trestle three feet off the ground. In the lower floor his wife and children lay huddled like rats ; on the upper, its irregularities smoothed with bundles of rush (primary elements of a mat), the lord and master slept. Such was the caveman's first attempt at fashioning an abode. By the entrance was a fireplace, and, scattered about, were the bones of monkeys and monitor lizards and the carapaces of tortoises that had served for food. Stuck in the roof was a broken comb of buffalo horn, true touch of civilisation, for the test of a real Vedda is that his hair must be stranger to a comb.

Getting information from Kauwa was like squeezing water out of a stone ; he could no more describe the simplest thing than he could fly. Still, patience does much and this is what we gleaned :

Tortoises and pangolins are considered good eating by the Veddas ; but the porcupine they abhor, calling it a *rodiya* among beasts, and only killing it to give to their dogs. Why Veddas never eat porcupine I have not been able to ascertain : it is said that, in the old lawless days, they would go the length of burning down a Sinhalese hut in which they discovered a porcupine being cooked. Pork they love because it clears the blood, and one or two pigs a month the Vedda must have. Venison causes itching and is not so good !

Vedda cookery, simple in the extreme, can still boast some tasty dishes : *Gona-perume* is a sausage consisting of alternate layers of sambur meat and fat. *Le-perume* is the same, with the addition of a third layer of blood-clot. *Goa-thel-perume* is made by skinning the monitor's meaty